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Message Text

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PAGE 01 PORT M 01030 030305Z POSS DUPE
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 /056 W
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R 020335Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2488
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
CINCPAC HONOLULU

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR MRN 1030 VICE 1018

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT PP
SUBJ: FIRST INDEPENDENT ELECTION: RAPID CHANGE; SOME CONSOLIDATION

REF: PORT MORESBY 0956

SUMMARY: FIRST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION SINCE INDEPENDENCE WAS GENERALLY PEACEFUL AND REASONABLY HONEST. ELECTION HIGHLIGHTED INCREASING DISSATISFACTION WITH INCUMBENT POLITICAL LEADERS AND OFFERED LITTLE TO INDICATE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MORE STABLE PARTY SYSTEM. ELECTION WAS NOT UNALLOYED SOMARE VICTORY, THOUGH HE CONSOLIDATED SUPPORT WITHIN PANGU/PPP COALITION AND THAT COALITION APPEARS TO HAVE EDGE IN FORMING NEW GOVERNMENT. NEW PARLIAMENT SHOULD BE MORE TALENTED THAN OLD AND PROSPECT IS FOR A MORE ABLE OPPOSITION REGARDLESS OF WHO FORMS GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, POSSIBILITY REMAINS OPEN FOR SOME BITTER OPPOSITION ALONG POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE REGIONAL LINES. END SUMMARY.
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CAMPAIGN

1. PNG'S FIRST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION SINCE INDEPENDENCE WAS WELL ADMINISTERED AND GENERALLY PEACEFULLY CONDUCTED CONSIDERING PRIMITIVE NATURE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INEXPERIENCE OF ELECTORAL OFFICERS. VIOLENCE HAD BEEN PREDICTED BY SOME OBSERVORS

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

BUT WAS CONFINED TO HIGHLANDS AND DID NOT OCCUR IN PORT MORESBY OR OTHER CENTERS. IN ENGA AND CHIMBU PROVINCES SUPPORTERS OF LOSING CANDIDATES MOBBED GOVERNMENT OFFICES. DEMONSTRATIONS WERE PUT DOWN BY RIOT POLICE. IN ENGA ONE MAN DIED IN CLASH BETWEEN SUPPORTERS OF LOSING AND WINNING CANDIDATES. IN CHIMBU PANGU EDUCATION MINISTER KABALE KALE RAN OVER AND KILLED A CHILD. RESULTING TRIBAL WARFARE LASTED FIVE WEEKS BUT WAS UNRELATED TO POLITICAL ISSUES.

2. NUMBER OF CANDIDATES FOR PARLIAMENT INCREASED SHARPLY, WITH 869 CANDIDATES STANDING FOR 108 SEATS. ON AVERAGE, THERE WERE EIGHT CANDIDATES PER SEAT, COMPARED WITH 5.5 IN 1964. INCREASE IS PARTLY DUE TO SHIFT FROM PREFERENTIAL VOTING TO FIRST-PAST-THE-POST.

3. PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION WITH INCUMBENTS WAS DECISIVELY INDICATED, AS ONLY 33 OF 96 STANDING INCUMBENTS WERE RETURNED. THIS TREND INCLUDED ALL PARTIES AND ALL REGIONS. THIS 34 PERCENT RATE OF RETURN IS A MARKED DECREASE FROM QOUW FIGURE OF 52 PERCENT AND INDICATES A GROWTHOF UNSATISFIED PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND TREND DOES NOT AUGER WELL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF STABLE PARTY SYSTEM.

PARLIAMENT

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4. DIRECT RESULT OF LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES (SOME SEATS EXCEEDED 20) LEFT MOST NEW MP'S WITH ONLY BETWEEN 25 AND 35 PERCENT OF VOTES CAST IN ELECTORATE. FINAL EFFECT OF THIS NOT YET EVIDENT BUT INDICATIONS ARE THAT SOME MEMBERS MAY CONSIDER OWN CLANS RATHER THAN ENTIRE ELECTORATES TO BE CONSTITUENCY. RESULT COULD BE INCREASED FRUSTRATION ON PART OF VOTERS NOT ACTIVELY REPRESENTED.

5. NEW PARLIAMENTARIANS ARE BETTER EDUCATED THAN PREVIOUS PARLIAMENT.

	1972 HOUSE	1977 HOUSE
PERCENT W/NO FORMAL EDUCATION	25	11
PERCENT W/SECONDARY EDUCATION	50	60
PERCENT OF UNIVERSITY GRADUATES	5	11

INCREASE WAS BROUGHT ABOUT BY REJECTION OF LESS EDUCATED INCUMBENTS. REELECTED INCUMBENTS HAVE ABOUT SAME EDUCATION LEVEL AS REST OF NEW HOUSE.

6. NEW HOUSE HAS ALSO MORE EXPERIENCED MEMBERS. THE NUMBER

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

OF FORMER SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS HAS RISEN FROM 8 TO 13 AND INCLUDES TWO PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONERS, ONE DEPARTMENTAL SECRETARY AND ONE DEPUTY COMMANDER OF DEFENCE FORCE.

7. PANGU'S SHOWING APPEARED TO BE VERY GOOD, PARTLY BECAUSE IT WAS EXPECTED TO DO POORLY AND PARTLY BECAUSE IT DID IN FACT GAIN ADDITIONAL SEATS. COMPARED WITH 1972 ELECTION, HOWEVER, ITS GAIN WAS MINIMAL. (SEVERAL PANGU MEMBERS DEFECTED BETWEEN 1972 AND 1977.) PPP WAS EXPECTED TO IMPROVE ITS POSITION SIGNIFICANTLY, BUT DID SO ONLY MARGINALLY. PPP IS ONLY GROUP WITH SERIOUS PRETENSIONS OF PARTY DISCIPLINE AND ONLY PARTY WITH BROAD GEOGRAPHIC BASE.

8. UNITED PARTY HAS BEEN FURTHER REDUCED TO A REGIONAL
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PAGE 04 PORT M 01030 030305Z POSS DUPE

HIGHLANDS PARTY AND SHOWS SIGNS OF BECOMING A HIGHLANDS PRESSURE GROUP. PAPUA BESENA DEFEATED PANGU'S DEPUTY LEADER SIR MAORI KIKI AND LEAPED FROM REPRESENTATION OFH2 MP'S TO 6, AND POSSIBLY 7. THE BOUGAINVILLE INTEREST (FORMERLY SECESSIONIST) GROUP CAPTURED ALL FOUR BOUGAINVILLEAN SEATS. ALL THREE MATAUNGAN INCUMBENTS WERE RETURNED FROM EAST NEW BRITAIN. HENCE, ALL GROUPS OUTSIDE PANGU/PPP ARE HEAVILY REGIONAL.

9. STILL FLUID STATE OF LOYALTIES OF NUMBER OF MP'S, IMPARTIAL OBSERVERS ARE NOT YET PREDICTING WHICH COALITION WILL FORM GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, PANGU/PPP COALITION HAS MORE SGLID SUPPORT AMONG ITS MEMBERS THAN DOES NATIONAL ALLIANCE ARRANGED AGAINST IT (SEE REFTEL). POSSIBILITY REMAINS THAT SOMARE WILL CHOOSE TO CO-OPT A PORTION OF NATIONAL ALLIANCE AND FORM GOVERNMENT WITH AN INITIALLY LARGE MAJORITY. AS CONCRETE INDICATIONS OF OBSERVERS' ASSESSMENT, BMOKMAKERS OFFER 5/4 ON SOMARE AS NEXT PM, WHILE ONLY 2/1 ON GUISE, WHO CARRIED NATIONAL ALLIANCE BANNER.

10; REGARDLESS OF WHO FORMS GOVERNMENT, PROSPECT IS FOR LOUD AND OCCASIONALLY BITTER CONFLICT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION. POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER REGIONAL POLARIZATION REMAINS IF PAPUA BESENA, MATAUNGANS, BOUGAINVILLEANS, AND UNITED PARTY SIT IN OPPOSITION.
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Message Attributes

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Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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SAS ID: 1418610
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FIRST INDEPENDENT ELECTION: RAPID CHANGE; SOME CONSOLIDATION
TAGS: PINT, PP
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/23dc9e4f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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